

Project Update: June 2013

Three municipalities were visited by the survey team in May and June 2013. First, the team visited municipality of Laak [07 50' 824" N; 125 53' 158" E] on May 17th-21st 2013. A total of 106 Plecopteran species were collected using light traps, opportunistic, and malaise. So far this is the most abundant area for Plecopteran species in Compostela Valley. Situated between the border between Compostela Valley and Agusan del Sur, we suspect that its abundance can be accounted to the diversity of the nearby Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS) located at Bunawan, Agusan del Sur. The area is widely known to house several species of large saltwater crocodiles including the world largest "Lolong" (*Crocodylus porosus*) affirmed by the National Geographic Team on November 9th 2011. But sadly the reptile died on February 2013. You may read the whole news in this page: <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/breaking-news/2013/02/10/lolong-world-s-largest-crocodile-dies-267567>. We are looking forward to conduct another serious studies in this site since this important wetland (AMWS) is beginning to be destructed by mixture of socio-economic activities in Agusan del Sur. Perhaps this might be a good extension of the project for the next round.

On June 3rd-5th 2013, the team went to the municipality of Compostela, specifically at Barangay Ngan. The areas vegetation is relatively disturbed but its fluvial system remains relatively pristine. Despite of the status of its ecosystem, we are able to collect three Plecopteran species. We only spent two nights in Barangay Ngan to save our budget and we proceed to the next sampling area at the municipality of Monkayo. On June 6th-8th 2013 the team spent two nights at Barangay Awao, Monkayo Compostela Valley Province. The area is marked by its magnificent waterfalls. However, our field guide told us that the upper portion of the waterfalls was slowly mined for gold while some villagers and other foreigners (particularly Japanese) destroy its natural formations in search for treasures. They say its part of the Yamashita treasure. To verify their stories, we climb the top of the Awao falls and found huge stone holes. Much more to this, the vegetation of the sides of the falls is slowly cleared by loggers that might cause some decrease of its water volume. Our field guide affirmed that the current water volume of Awao falls is way much smaller compared 10 years back. We manage to collect 14 Plecopteran species from Awao using Malaise, light traps, and opportunistic sampling methods.

Our first batch of specimens was already received by Dr. Ignac Sivec of Slovenia Museum of Natural History, Slovenia. About 50 specimens were currently carefully studied for the verification of our specimens. We are really hoping that our materials sent to him will reveal a new genus or new species of Plecoptera to science. This is very important especially in providing more information to our local policy makers in creating a more comprehensive and stringer management plan for the ecosystems left in Compostela Valley.

Our team was not allowed to go to the municipalities of Maco and Mawab. These are the two areas of the province where there is the presence of insurgents and rebel groups. Just recently, two encounters between government troops and rebels was reported at the municipality of Maco causing some several casualties between sides. I cannot take the risk for my team so I decided not to include these areas in our sampling sites. Furthermore, we

are praying for good weather this coming months. Philippines was recently visited two tropical storms causing some delays of our sampling periods.

Only two municipalities left to be explored. They are the municipalities of Maragusan where we plan to make expedition at Mt. Candalaga this coming July 26th-31st. Mt. Candalaga is very famous for its *Rafflesia mira* (one of the largest flower in the world). This is also part of the mountain range of the Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) hence a very important biological corridor in Mindanao. We are hoping to discover more interesting species on this site and hopefully would contribute to its preservation. The last site to be explored by the team will be at Municipality of Pantukan which is also part of the Eastern Mindanao Biological Corridor.

I have attached some pictures from our recent trips. Or you may visit www.minirg.org.





